



Aruba's first DART camp is a resounding success!

This summer the parents of Aruba had the opportunity to send their children to a DART camp offered by the Police Corp in cooperation with the Royal Dutch Marines. Something completely new to the island, DART stands for **D**iscipline, **A**mor (love) **R**espect and **T**olerance. It was part of the "Let's Talk!" program headed by Deputy Commissioner of Police Trudy Hassel, who with the body of police working with her deserves recognition for her tireless efforts to see that Aruba's youth stay on track and maintain the fine character for which the Aruban people are known.

The DART camp took place during the last weeks of July, and nearly eighty of the island's youth, ranging in ages from eight until seventeen took part. A DART camp is a gentler version of "Boot Camp" aimed more at counseling and fun, with a good dose of self-discipline and self-esteem training combined. Conducting the camp along with Commissioner Hassel were volunteers from Teen Challenge, The Women's Club of Aruba, The Foundation for Self-Esteem, and staff from the Instituto di Cultura, which taught dance and arts.

The camp was offered free to parents that are concerned for the values and attitudes of their children. Both the police and many parents are concerned about the influences of the current pop culture, with music, movies, and video games that are so focused on violence and disrespectful attitudes. These displays or poor attitude are the antithesis of the Aruban way of life, and young people are impressionable and tend to adopt the postures of what they see in the movies and TV. Add to that the ever-increasing sadistic violence one finds in the latest video games and music, and the police and many parents agree that negative subliminal messages are being absorbed by our island's youth.

The two weeks of concentrated physical activity conducted by the seven members of the ArubaMil, (Aruban Dutch Marines) helped to shape up the bodies of the young people, both male and female. Counseling sessions and interactive games developed understanding of both the concerns of their parents, and the need to communicate with and respect them. They learned to work out and talk about any problems they have with other youth instead of letting their anger control them. The two weeks of the camp were aimed at enlightening the youth, and giving them the opportunity to express and explore their own concerns, while having fun and making friends.

During a Family Day on July 28, the "graduates" received certificates for completing the camp, and many received particular commendation for their enthusiastic response and attitude. Twelve young people did so well that they were chosen to participate in the next DART camp as leaders, and another twelve received awards for the most improvement in their attitudes. The children unanimously declared their enjoyment of the camp, and expressed the desire to repeat it if they could.

During the ceremonies, witnessed by pleased parents, a number of other awards were presented in gratitude for hard work and devotion to the success of the camp. These went to the members of the foundations and service organizations that participated, and to the seven ArubaMil that worked so hard with the youth over the two weeks. The efforts of the corporals and sergeant were also acknowledged with weekend stays donated by some of the island's resorts, which came as a very pleasant surprise. Lieutenant-Corporal Gert-Jan Erenberg, Commander of the Royal Dutch Marine Camp in Saveneta, was given a plaque in gratitude for the indispensable cooperation of the marines in this effort.

Aruba's first DART camp was an experiment that proved wonderfully successful. Sr. Papito Comenencia, head of public relations was moved to tears as he offered a final thank you and prayer for the very encouraging results of weeks of devoted effort by so many. The police, in their initiation of the "Let's Talk!" program and the DART camp are aggressively pro-active in recognizing the many negative influences on today's youth, not only in Aruba, and what we, as a community need to do to protect them, and their future. Aruba is accustomed to a certain way of life, and maintaining it with the next generation is a priority to the police, and should be to all parents. As a number of parents reported, the DART camp was a very successful initiative, and the changes in the children were often dramatic. The hope that is repeated was also expressed, and plans are being made to organize another in the near future.